

FOCUS THIS WEEK

SUPPORTING LITERACY IN YOUR ROLE

- Review
- Reflect
- Develop

Literacy News

SPRING TERM, PART 1 011: 5TH FEBRUARY 2018

Millionaires!

Contributors

- Aaron
- Alex
- Antonio
- Armani
- Bradley
- Callum
- Connor
- Dean
- Denham
- Dominic
- George
- Harvey C
- Harvey R
- Isaac
- Jack
- Jay
- Josh C
- Josh T
- Phoenix
- Reece
- Theo
- TJ
- Tristan
- Tyler

To hit the first million words at this stage of the year is a phenomenal achievement for our school. It is testament to the hard work of our support specialists and the determination of some of our young people that we have blasted our previous year's total out of the park.

But what does a million words look like? How much of an achievement is this really? And is quantity helpful when we are striving to improve the quality of reading across the school?

For you, as a competent adult reader, a million words is not a huge demand. To give you perspective, this is the number of words in the seven storyline *Harry Potter* volumes. In a cruel twist of irony, it is also widely believed that an author does not begin to master their craft until they have passed the million words mark. It might also surprise you to discover that everything we have left of Shakespeare's writing adds up to a meagre 884,647 words (33,000 different ones), or around twice what Jay has read since September. The longest novel written in English, *Clarissa*, comes in at around 950k, the whole *Lord of the Rings* at less than 500k and even the *King James Bible* scores only 780k words. Traditional writing is beginning to look less daunting with the wider enjoyment of new media. One of the most popular visual novels, *Clannad*, racks up 1.3 million words, and even short ones run longer than most novels as they are the result of collaborative writing teams who need to provide many hours of engagement for the player. At £30+ the product has to offer the same value for money a game would.

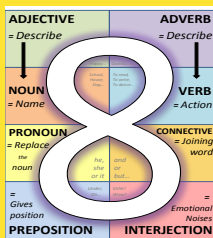
How long do you take to read a million words?

If you look at what you are currently reading and allow 25,000 words per 100 pages, you should be able to work it how many books you will need. How many days does it take you to read that 100 pages? Multiply that number by 40 and you'll know! The average person will read at 300 words/minute, and therefore need 60 hours to complete the Potter saga. *The Great Gatsby*, *Black Beauty* and *Brave New World* are all good examples of novels that can be binge read in just one evening, coming in at less than 3.5 hours each.

Continued on page 2.

Every Lesson A Literacy Lesson

SPECIAL EDITION



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Cover story continues	2
Updates	3
Reading	3
CPD	3
AR Tables	4



On the other hand, the current *Oxford English Dictionary*, with obscure specialist terms removed, stands at three quarters of a million entries, 10,000 of which you need to be fluent and 20-40,000 of which the average native speaker knows. As a graduate, you would be expected to know between 60-75,000 of these.

A figure of 1,000 words is needed to be functional in communication which is normally reached by the third birthday. When we look at teens, the average teenager will know only around 3,000. Importantly, 'know' in this context means words they may use or understand accurately. Different studies have shown teenagers may actually count as many as 25,000 words they vaguely understand when encountered and up to 50,000 that do not prevent wider comprehension difficulty.

Looking at foreign language learning, research has generally agreed that the learner needs to know 3,000 words to cover 95% understanding, but as the remaining 5% is likely to include important, less common words the magic figure of 10,000 words is presented for native fluency. So, while our average teen might have the understanding of a 95% comprehensive language learner, they do at least have the advantage of not being so hindered by their missing 5%.

With this awareness, we can reflect on our own pupils. Some have diagnosed speech and language needs, while others have language restriction such that they react angrily to higher level language use (genuine example: Pupil: 'What's that for?' Me: 'Loft access.' Pupil 'Why are you trying to sound f-ing posh?' *pupil storms out of classroom*).

One seriously worrying study from America, which is supported by similar work in the UK, has given rise to the 30 million words initiative, which refers to a study conducted by psychologists Betty Hart and Todd Risley, which showed that children from lower-income families hear a staggering 30 million fewer words than children from higher-income families by the time they are 4 years old. You can read more at thirtymillionwords.org.

For the above reasons, and more, we know we have to give serious consideration to broadening the vocabulary of our students. As educators we are aware of the wider implications of this deficit. Hearing words does so much more than pass on vocabulary. There are countless ways in which connections are forged in the brain and communication with developing children shapes every aspect of their social, emotional and cognitive development. The vocabulary deficit is likely to suggest attachment and attention issues, as children's emotional needs are being neglected by the silence in which they are being isolated.

When we sit with the child who is reading only a few words a week, we are therefore giving them so much more than the gift of reading. They enjoy the comfort of close, personal attention, the interaction in language being shared around the individual session. With their 1:1 support, they are being given new language through the text, but also in the dialogue around it, so introducing new terms of praise and in discussion is really important.

Our individual reading sessions contribute a focussed blast of targeted language enrichment, which is an invaluable bonding and development session to enhance the wider learning experience. Being surrounded by high quality vocabulary which challenges and stretches the children, not only stimulates their interest and curiosity but grows their understanding and security as the world around them becomes less alien sounding. The proviso here is that we need to tread carefully the fine line between challenge and alienation, between using vocabulary that they can process and that which lies beyond reach. Use your best language when speaking to them, but be conscious of those words which may be unfamiliar, and bracket in alternatives, as you do for specialist terms in normal learning, for example, 'I want you to calculate (work out) the perimeter (the distance around the edge of the shape).' This is happening so well around school at present, so please, keep up the excellent work in this area.

Reading a million words may be a holiday challenge for some staff or a lifetime of reading for some pupils. In itself, reaching a quantity milestone may not be much of an achievement. Reaching the 40th birthday is not a great achievement in our culture, but it is certainly one packed with meaning for many people. In the same way a school sharing the reading of a million words is not newsworthy outside our institution. But for language limited young people, greater exposure to wider vocabulary and this additional resource to help close that 30 million word gap is invaluable. It is a helpful comparative measure as we reflect on our progress, achievements and development as we strive to improve the school. It is data we can use to point out just how effective our expensive 1:1 & support provision is, and a way in which we can show pupils their achievement in very real terms. Bradley has read very few words in the total, but his hard work in achieving success at his level is just as important as any other pupil's. Without his words we would not have hit the target that day. In many ways this achievement could feel like only a tiny step, but we know just how significant it is to see many of our pupils are engaging on this competitive level and one in particular had a huge grin when informed he had read the millionth word this year!

Well done to all – keep being awesome!

Footnote: this total does not include most of the year 7, as they resist AR quizzing and do not attend 1:1 literacy. I know from the titles they have been enjoying in tutor time that they have read at least another million over the last term, so one of our targets has to be to get them engaged with the program.

Literacy In PSHE

Literacy input in this subject area has much in common with that of SEAL and Discover, addressed in the last two editions. As a discussion based, issue focussed subject, it relies on the ability of staff to tease out through discussion the thoughts and responses of the pupils. In doing this, pupils are also helped to develop their vocabulary, refining their thinking and learning both the proper terms and the popular slang for the things they discuss, whether that be around sex and relationships, drugs or behavioural issues.

A significant time is spent in addressing some of the inappropriate language pupils might use around school. In helping them to understand what these picked up insults mean, we aid them in developing an understanding of the impact they could have on others. It is a frequent occurrence that pupils are horrified by what they have said when they appreciate its true meaning. Sadly pupils hear some terrible expressions, primarily from in-game chat while playing console games, which they then repeat around school, spreading it further.

One of the exciting aspects of vocabulary development is our

CPD: REMINDERS

- Log in at the school portal.
- Star Reading reports provide you with basic reading information. Search my class to find your group.
- Accelerated Reader will provide data on book quiz performance and word count. It also shows progress towards reading targets that have now been set.
- All training and information is in the staff drive, under 1.Northern House 2017 > literacy.

IEP Targets

If you are setting literacy targets, remember to make clear how the pupil will succeed.

Setting an AR related target is easily measureable, e.g. pass 3 quizzes, or read 10,000 words

Alternative Reading: Collaborative Writing

Cold and wet, tired and exhausted, she made her way across the car park and up the concrete stairs. The phone, lost somewhere in her bag, continued to ring in an endless needling cry. She didn't care. They would wait. Like she had waited. Waited for the call that never came. Waited in that other lifetime.

Climbing. Climbing the stairs. All he could think was climb the stairs. The tiredness weighed him down, dragging as though he was anchored to the seabed, unable to swim up to the sunlight glints above. It had been a bad day. The worst of times and it was only Monday.

The echoing clunk of her heels on the naked steps filled the stairway. Nearly there, she counted the last flight and exhaled loudly as she turned to her left and began the walk along the landing, one hand on the wooden handrail for support. Looking out across the town's rooftops she could see the brighter lights of the fairground on the common reaching up into the night sky. They would be having fun, the kids there, spoiled by the dazzling excitement on offer. Here it was another story, dark and dreary, only cracks of light from the curtained windows and the muffled

own Becca. It is a common sight to see her behaving bizarrely in the lesson, as she is an advocate of acting out new words to reinforce learning of these.

The written work in lessons is generally completed using carefully developed task sheets. These might be mind maps, quiz questions or flow charts. The clear scaffolding for younger or less able writers provides a safety net to allow them to show their knowledge and understanding. Older pupils tend to complete many of their written tasks while on their off site placement days, returning these to their files in the next discussion lesson.

When it comes to marking, spellings are clearly corrected and literacy issues are addressed to make sure pupils learn and aim to avoid repeating their error.

When you look at pupil files in PSHE it can be seen literacy is being well supported in written work. Paperwork is well presented and simple, with clear purpose, allowing pupils to succeed. Marking is kept equally simple, meaning pupils are supported but allowed to focus on showing what they have learned without being limited by their communication skills.

Personal Development

As we reach the halfway point in the academic year, it is a great opportunity to review and reflect. This is especially important regarding the literacy, numeracy & SMSC aspects of our work, regardless of our role.

One sure-fire way to develop is to set 3 simple targets to achieve next half term, such as every pupil will read aloud at least once in a lesson, or I will read 3 books for my own pleasure, or I will encourage pupils to use commas.

Collaborative Fun!

A huge number of sites exist for the purpose of sharing creative writing, most of which offer the chance to contribute to a shared text. I thought we might try that!

The idea is simple, we write a section of the story and then nominate someone else to add the next part. It can connect in any way and go in any direction. You can even change the nature of the text and genre. Sections should be between 100 & 400 words and must be completed within 3 working days.

The file is in the literacy folder, so please resave it there, following the instructions at the top of the text.

sounds of the flat dwellers entertainment. It was hard to know what they were watching, or playing, but there was shouting. She moved on, still slowly, finally reaching the door. The black number 116 centred on the red painted door told her it was the right place.

I nominate Chantal to tell the next part of the story.

Found in: 1.Northern House 2017> Literacy> Collaborative Writing Project

Spring Term Ladders

03 February 2018					
Accelerated Reader Quiz League II					
		Quizzes	100.00%	Accuracy average	Points earned
1st	Jay	10	8	96.00%	38.0
2nd	Tristan	8	7	98.80%	5.5
3rd	Tyler H	4	2	90.00%	2.2
	Aaron	1	1	100.00%	2.0
	TJ	5	3	80.00%	1.9
	Josh C	1	0	60.00%	1.8
	Reece P	3	3	100.00%	1.5
	Jack P	3	2	86.70%	1.3
	Bradley	2	2	100.00%	1.0
	George	2	2	100.00%	1.0
	Denham	1	1	90.00%	0.9
	Josh T	1	1	100.00%	0.5
	Phoenix	1	1	100.00%	0.5
Totals		42	33	92.42%	58.1
			78.57%		
Weekly School Pass Rate = 98.4%					

WORD RACE

03 February 2018

	Quizzes		Word Count	
	Passed	Taken	Term	This week
Jay	10	10	265,620	81,732
Tristan	8	8	22,783	795
Josh C	1	1	18,192	
Aaron	1	1	15,304	15,304
Tyler	4	4	9,631	9,631
Denham	1	1	6,522	
Jack	3	3	3,206	721
George	2	2	2,152	
Josh T	1	1	1,584	1,584
Phoenix	1	1	1,543	
Reece P	3	3	1,029	419
TJ	4	5	864	
Bradley	2	2	287	142
Totals	41	42	348,717	110,328

Words Read (2017-18)

1,099,387

“Read,
read,
read!”

Alex Wheatle to NH
pupils, December 2017